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THE TERRACOTTA HEADS OF TEOTIHUACAN.

II.

In the first part of this paper, clay portrait-heads, showing evidences of having once been attached to bodies made of a perishable substance, were discussed. In this second part the evidence of the Spanish chroniclers will be presented, showing that, at the time of the Conquest, there existed the custom of making small effigies of the dead, some of which consisted of a wooden body on which a portrait-head was mounted. As these effigies were invariably connected with mortuary customs a brief consideration of them is, first of all, necessary.

Among the Ancient Mexicans the circumstances attending the death of each individual determined the funeral ceremonies, and the form as well as the site of interment. The early writers¹ relate that they also believed the soul's future destination to be regulated by the circumstances of decease: thus "those who died a natural death, be they lord, noble, commoner or laborer, man, woman or child, were cremated, and went, after a long and difficult journey, to Mictlan, the land of the dead." The bodies of those who died of incurable and contagious diseases, or were killed by lightning or by drowning, were buried in special graves, and "went to Tlalocan, a terrestrial paradise." Finally, the warriors slain in battle or in the hands of the enemy, as well as the women who died in childbirth, went to the Sun, and extraordinary honors were paid to their remains. The courtyard of a special temple was dedicated to the interment of the women who, in the words of the old chronicler, "were canonized as saints and adored as goddesses." The skulls of the illustrious warriors were preserved, mounted on palisades, in a portion of the temple named Tzompautli.²

¹ Sahagun, *Historia*, Appendix to book III, chs. 1, 2, 3; Torquemada, *Monarquia*, vol. II, p. 530; Mendieta, *Historia*, p. 164; Clavijero, *Historia*, p. 147; Kingsborough, vol. VI, p. 227; Duran, *Historia*, vol. II, p. 114.

² Sahagun, book VI, ch. XXIX, book IX, ch. VI, Appen. to book II, in description of the great temple of Mexico; Bernal Diaz, *Histoire véridique de la Conquête*, trad.

Details will here be given only of the ceremonies connected with the first two kinds of funeral rites. In the case of those who died from natural causes³ and were cremated, an address was delivered over the body by the elders or priests whose special office it was, and who then proceeded to cut, prepare, and tie the papers with which the body was dressed. Its limbs were drawn up and it was tightly bound in its wrappings (*fig. 38*). Above this they put the raiment of the "god"^{3a} to whom the dead person had been especially devoted, or in whose temple the ceremonies were to take place.⁴ According to another writer,⁵ the body was dressed in the garb of the "god whom he had represented in life, for all noblemen did represent idoles and carried the name of one." In the accounts of the magnificent obsequies of several of the "emperors" of Mexico, it is stated that their bodies (and subsequently their effigies) were successively arrayed in

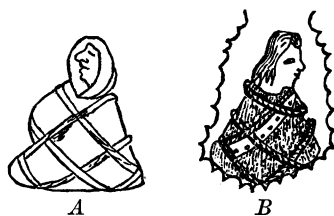


FIG. 38.—A, Orozco y Berra, *Atlas*, pl. 18; B, *Mappe Quinatzin I*, Aubin, *op. cit.*

the rich garments of the "four principal gods," this portion of the ritual devolving upon the highest in rank present. Describing the obsequies of the "emperor" Axayacatl, "who had represented in life our god Huitzilopochtli" (*fig. 39, B*, from Duran's *Atlas*, where this chief is depicted as dead), Padre Duran⁶ relates: "They made a large

Jourdanet, Paris, 1877, p. 252; Kingsborough, vol. vi, Codex Mendoza, pt. ii, text to pl. LXXX; *Relacion de Andrés de Tápia*, *Documentos*, ed. Icazbalceta, vol. ii, p. 583.

³Sahagun, Appendix to book III.

^{3a}It has been necessary in the first part of the paper and in this to retain the misleading terms used by the early Spanish writers, such as "gods," emperors, monarchs, etc.

⁴Torquemada, vol. ii, p. 521.

⁵Acosta, *op. cit.* lib. 5, p. 349, where it is also related that "the priest who did the office of the dead was decked with the marks of the same idoll." In connection with the wearing of the distinctive garb of a deity by priests, see also Sahagun, book II, ch. XXI; Motolinia, trat. i, ch. v; Duran, vol. i, p. 283, vol. ii, pp. 91, 92, 106.

⁶Vol. i, ch. xxxix, pp. 304, 306.

arbour called *tlacochcalli*, meaning 'house of rest or repose,'⁷ and in it they placed a statue, the portrait of the dead monarch, made of splinters of pine tied together," on which was mounted a head, "as of a person," decorated with feathers. They covered the image with a fine robe representing Huitzilopochtli: over this was hung the dress of the god Tlaloc, with the accessory symbolic decorations to be worn on the head or carried in the hand. "The next garment was that of the god Youalahua, and the fourth that of Quetzalcoatl."⁸

To return to the usual ceremony: the body itself, wrapped as before described, was conveyed some days later to the court of the temple, where, before the image of the god, stood a large caldron made of lime and stone into which it was thrown and consumed by the flames of the

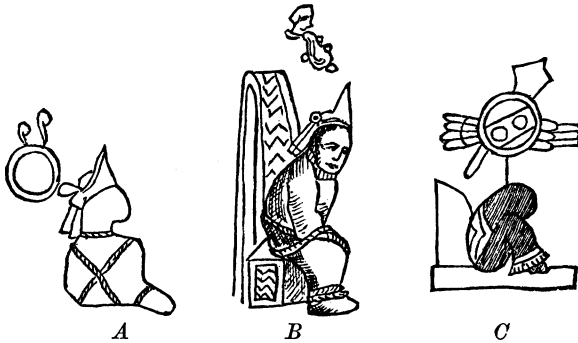


FIG. 39.—A, *Mapa de Tepechpan*; B, *Atlas Duran*; C, *Vatican Codex*.

"sacred wood," the priests stirring it with long poles. When the fire burnt out, the ashes were collected, water was poured over them, and they were buried in the ground; then, according to Sahagun, "the

⁷ From the verb *cochi* = to sleep, and *calli* = house.

⁸ See, also, the account of the funeral of the same "emperor" in Tezozomoc, *Cronica Mexicana*, p. 427. The body of Ahuizotl was clothed and anointed, and "thus he became consecrated as a god, and was placed among the gods." His remains were also consumed before Huitzilopochtli (Duran, I, p. 408). The "emperor" Tizoc was "dressed in the garb of four gods" and interred in the same place (Duran, I, p. 322). Of the same "monarch," Tezozomoc (*op. cit.* pp. 451, 455) states that "on the day after the cremation, whilst his portrait was being carved in wood, the kings of Texcoco and Tacuba . . . proposed to adorn his body in effigy and inter it solemnly." The following account of the funeral ceremonies, by Tezozomoc, is of interest. It is here related that "His body was placed, in squatting posture, on a fine mat, and was covered from the shoulders with 17 finely worked, thin robes,

remaining bones were placed in a jar,⁹ . . which was then buried in a room of their dwelling," and daily offerings were made before it. At the end of a year the contents of the vessel were again burnt, the ashes buried, and the remaining fragments preserved. This was repeated until, at the end of three or four years, all was consumed, and thus the duties towards the dead came to an end. Torquemada mentions the keeping of the ashes and bones in earthen vessels (vol. II, pp. 523, 527), and among other details states: "They cut from the top of the head of the dead person a lock of hair; . . . and these, with the precious green stone, the bones and ashes, were placed in a small coffer of stone or wood, finely carved and painted both inside and outside. On top of this box they put an image of the defunct, made of wood dressed and adorned, and before it they placed offerings, calling this ceremony *Quitonaltia* (from *tonalli*=portion, lit. "giving them their portion"): . . each year in his memory, they sacrificed before the coffer, quails, rabbits, birds and butterflies: they also placed before the coffer and the portrait of the dead resting on it, much incense and offerings of food and wine, flowers and roses, also the incense sticks called *acayetl*. These offerings were made once a year for four years."

Motolinia (*op. cit.*, p. 31) relates that the mourning and offerings were repeated, twenty days after the burial, and then at regular intervals of eighty days, during one year, and afterwards for four years only once a year, on the anniversary. He adds the important fact that, after death, to the name of each individual the surname *teotl* was added, meaning, as he says, "god or saint."¹⁰

From the collective evidence of the best authorities, it is therefore

over which a richer one was thrown bearing on it, beautifully embroidered, the image of Tezcatlipoca. His face was covered with a mask of gold, hollow and perfectly moulded so as to represent his physiognomy." When the remains of the "emperor" were reduced to ashes, these with the other relics were collected and placed "in a small coffer painted inside and outside with images of gods." This was tightly closed, and on it was placed a "statue carved in wood that was a perfect portrait of the 'emperor'; . . both were afterwards removed to the temple by the priests, and placed in a sort of niche" (C. M. de Bustamante, *Texcoco en los últimos tiempos*: Mexico, 1826). See, also, Francisco Lopez de Gomara, *Cronica de Nueva España*, book II, p. 166, for description of an effigy of the deceased "king of Michoacan"; and Clavijero, ed. Mora, p. 192, where reasons are given for the dressing of the dead in the raiment of different gods.

⁹ Cf. Torquemada, vol. II, p. 528.

¹⁰ In corroboration of this, see Mendieta, *op. cit.*, p. 84; Sahagun, book X, ch. XXIX, § 12.

fully proved that the cremated remains of individuals who had died from natural causes were preserved, for a stated length of time, in a room of the dwelling set apart for the purpose: that, by inference, small portraits or images of the defunct, who was surnamed (such a one) *teotl*, or god, were kept with the remains, and prescribed periodical offerings placed before them. It is easy to understand how it came about that even these early writers themselves fell into the still prevalent error of supposing the Ancient Mexicans to have had in their dwellings "oratories in which they kept a number of idols, household gods that they adored and propitiated by daily offerings and sacrifices."¹¹

The true nature of these "oratories and idols" can be best understood by a careful sifting of the rather confused but very minute details, preserved by early writers, of ceremonies held during the year, on certain feasts in memory of those who had died from lightning, drowning, or certain contagious and incurable diseases, and after death went to Tlalocan.¹² "The body of such a one was not cremated, but was buried in a special grave. Twigs of the wild amaranth were laid upon his cheeks and face, and his forehead was anointed with *teaxtelle*, a blue dye."¹³

¹¹ "Within the doors of their houses they had oratories and special rooms where they kept their idols, just as nowadays they use them for sacred images" (Duran, vol. II, p. 295). Motolinia (tratado I, p. 33) says: "And in many places they had what were like oratories, where they kept great quantities of idols of different forms and shapes, . . . some like men, some like women, . . . others had diverse insignia by which they knew what "devil" they represented." The same writer says: "If, a hundred years hence, one were to excavate in the courtyards of the ancient temples of idols, one would ever find idols, for they made so many. When a child was born they made an idol, at the end of a year a larger one, after four years another, and as it grew up they went on making idols; and of these the foundations and walls are full and in the courtyards there are many of them." Query: were these idols not portraits?

Orozco y Berra, *op. cit.* vol. III, p. 409, gives an interesting incident preserved in the annals of the kingdom of Texcoco, in which it is distinctly related of certain murdered individuals, that a sculptured portrait was made of each one, and this, richly dressed and adorned, was placed on the wall in a room of the palace. Commenting on these, Orozco y Berra alludes to the "custom of the Mexicans of having Penates in their habitations."

Sahagun says (appendix to book II, § 5), "In honor of the gods which they had in their houses" they performed the daily duty of sweeping the dwelling and burning incense and making offerings to "the images."

¹² Tlalocan means literally "a place in the earth or ground."

¹³ See, e. g., Sahagun, book III, ch. I, § II; Torquemada, book VI, ch. XXXVIII.

In the 13th month, *Tepeilhuitl* (mountain festival), "a feast was held in honor of the mountains,¹⁴ and images were made in honor of them," and also "in memory of those who had been drowned, killed by lightning, or who had died in such a manner that they could not be burnt, but were, instead, buried." These images were called *ecatotontin*,¹⁵ and are described thus: "They made, of pieces of wood or stick of the thickness of the wrist, the foundations of tiny figures, resembling the dolls used by the little girls of our Spanish nation." So says Torquemada; while Sahagun compares the figures to "infant boys and girls." These pieces of wood were smeared with the dough *tzoalli*, and on the top of each piece of wood¹⁶ they put "a

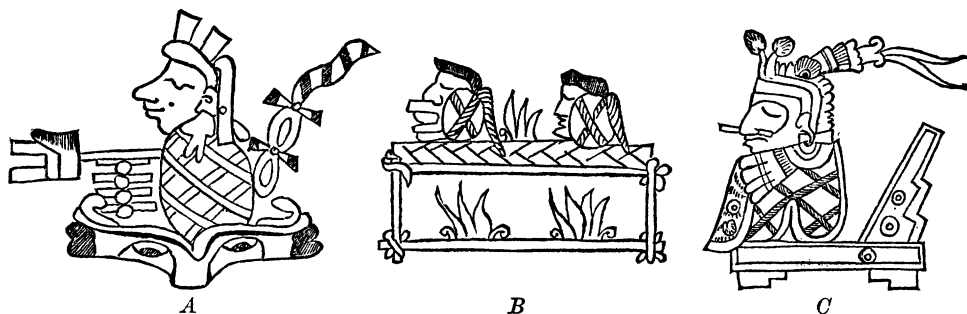


FIG. 40.—A, *Fejervary Codex*; B, *Bodleian Codex*; C, *Borgian Codex*.

¹⁴ Facts and quotations are taken from Sahagun, book II, chs. XIII, XXXII; and from Torquemada, vol. II, pp. 64, 279.

¹⁵ "According to M. Remi Siméon (Sahagun, trad. Jourdanet et Siméon, p. 71), this word is "the plural of *ecatontli*, the diminutive of *ecatl* = wind." The name "little wind" seems, however, in connection with these images, absolutely meaningless.

Drawing attention to the facts, (1) that Fray Sahagun wrote down this word under the dictation of an Indian; and (2) that "the Mexicans do not pronounce the letter m, . . and thus say *exico* instead of Mexico" (Fray Andres de Olmos, *Arte de la Lengua Mexicana*: Mexico, 1547, parte III, cap. VI), it seems possible that the actual word may have been formed from *mecatl* = cord. This is the common root of *mecayotia* = "to bind something with cords"; and *mecayotl* = "blood-relationship" (Molina, *Vocabulario*). A diminutive formed of either of these would, in accordance with the comprehensive character of the Nahuatl language, embrace the double meaning of the two words; and thus *mecayotonilli* would mean "kindred, something small, bound with cords."

The reader who is acquainted with the vicissitudes of Fray Sahagun's original text will admit the possibilities of even greater errors in the orthography of names.

¹⁶ The Spanish word *trozo*, here used, is translated "piece of a thing cut off," or "a log of wood." The dough *tzoalli* is repeatedly mentioned by Sahagun and Duran, as "the material used by the natives for the manufacture of idols." The latter

head like that of a person." These images were then placed on "certain snakes made of wood or of the roots of trees, with a snake-head neatly carved on them." "Long rolls of the same dough were laid before them; these were called *yomio* (his bones)."

The most trustworthy of sources, the native pictorial representations, give us the actual appearance and the true character of the images described above; and in *figures* 40, 42, 45, 46, are numerous examples, taken from various sources, of mummied dead, drawn in a conventional manner, which even at the present day can scarcely find more apt comparison than to a *bambino* wrapped in its swaddling clothes. In *fig.* 40, *A*, is a woman's body thus tied, recognizable as such from the head-dress and her instrument of labor, the *metlatl*, on which the maize is even now ground, lying overturned before her. It is resting upon a "carved head of a snake," in which experts in Mexican picture-writings will recognize a well-known and often-used

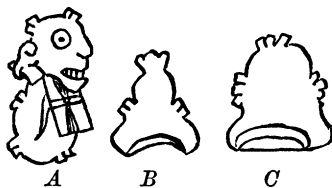


FIG. 41.—*A*, Vienna Codex; *B* and *C*, Mapa de tributo (Lorenzana).

symbol, meaning "in the earth or cave." This alone points to the probable reason why this carved symbol accompanied the images of those who were buried in the ground, and gives us the important knowledge that the *ecatontin* were, undoubtedly, miniature effigies of the dead, and that,—when these "were placed with much ceremony on altars in the oratory, and they offered them *tamales* and other food, burned incense before them, and adorned them with flowers, also sang songs in their praise, and drank wine in their honor,"—it was but an observance of prescribed funeral ceremonies in memory of those

explains, more than once, that it was made of amaranth seeds and maize kneaded with black honey (vol. II, p. 197). Besides being edible, this material evidently possessed the valuable properties of plasticity, of retaining, while hardening, the shape into which it was moulded, and of fixing permanently objects set into it. Apparently the latter qualities alone caused it to be smeared on the "foundations of wood" so as to attach the papers afterwards wrapped about them, and to hold firmly in place the surmounting head which was set into the adhesive mass.

whose mortal remains were missing from the family resting place, but whose images were kept there and held in veneration.

The true character of the "oratories" is thus established; and, reviewing Fray Motolinia's testimony (see Note 11 and the whole of the passage quoted from), we see not only that such funeral chambers were found in the dwelling itself, but that "public ones" existed; and we can account for the very great number of so-called "idols," found in these and in the court-yards, by the natural inference, that the images of the dead were never destroyed, but were allowed to accumulate in stated localities.

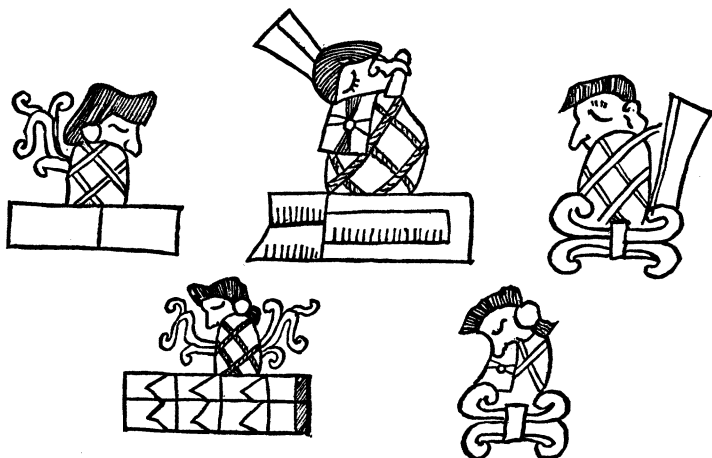


FIG. 42.—*Vienna Codex.*

It was believed that diseases such as gout, inflammation, lameness, paralysis, dropsy, were caused by the cold proceeding from the lofty snow-capped peaks that surround the Valley of Mexico. In the 16th month of the year *Atemoztli* (the falling of the waters), when the season of storms and rain set in, a feast was held in which a kind of propitiatory offering was made by those suffering from and exposed to these ills. The offering consisted of small edible images made of the dough *tzoalli*, used for similar purposes in other religious ceremonies. It was unlawful for any one but a priest to make these. He shaped them "like a mountain, but with the semblance of a person," giving them teeth of pumpkin-seeds and eyes of round black beans. These were decked with the consecrated papers on which the sacred

gum *ulli* had been dropped, that were hung "about the neck of the little images like a deacon's stole."

After certain ceremonies, these images were broken and the fragments exposed to the sun to dry, upon the roof of the house, whence they were taken each day and eaten little by little, "probably in the belief that cure or prevention was thus obtained." These images were, it is expressly stated, named *tepeme* or *tepietli*.¹⁷ In the Vienna Codex¹⁸ (Kingsborough, vol. II) the writer has found representations of these, one of which is given in *fig. 41, A*. It will be observed that it exactly answers the above description, and moreover that its contour is the well-known conventional broken line used in the drawing of mountains themselves in other Mexican picture-writings, two illustrations of which are given (*fig. 41, B, C*).



FIG. 43.—Seated figure. Author's collection.

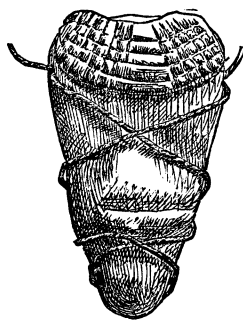


FIG. 44.—Author's Collection.

Returning to the details, collected by Fray Sahagun, of the observances held in the "mountain festival," internal evidence shows that

¹⁷ *Tepeme* is the plural of mountain. The word *Tepietli* occurs in Bustamante's edition of Sahagun, vol. I, p. 72. In *Tepitoton*, translated "little ones," the meaning is misconceived, as is evident by comparison with the two preceding words. "This was the name given to the Penates and to the idols that represented them" (Clavijero, ed. Mora, p. 156). Cf. the mention of "Lares" in Torquemada, vol. II, p. 64.

¹⁸ The Vienna Codex, as well as the two MSS. preserved in the Library at Oxford, and known as *Arch. Bodl. H. 75* and *Arch. Seld. A. 2*, have been considered by Orozco y Berra (*Historia*, vol. I, p. 53), and by more recent Mexican authorities, to be "of *mizteco tzapoteco*" provenance. The writer, who has made a special study of these documents and taken particular care to compare the phonetic symbols contained in them with those in recognized Mexican codexes, does not hesitate to affirm that the three documents in question are purely Mexican, and are to be interpreted by means of the Nahuatl language.

the true nature of the *ecatotontin* was, purposely perhaps, withheld from him, and that, at all events he has confounded them with the above-described edible, cure-working *tepeme* (fig. 41, A). He understood that both kinds of images were made at the above feast, and it was but natural that confusion should have arisen, and certain rites assumed to have been held in honor of the *tepeme*; whereas, the identity of these rites with the funeral ceremonies already described, and the totally different character of the *tepeme* lead to the conviction that they were in reality performed in memory of the dead before their portrait-effigies, the *ecatotontin*. This enables us to comprehend many valuable details connected with such effigies, which complete the knowledge we have of them. Thus it is erroneously said, of the edible images, "their dress was according to the image of the god they represented" (book I, ch. XXI): "On both sides they covered the images with the papers called *tetcuill*, and put crowns of feathers on their heads" (book II, ch. XXXII). These papers are to be seen on both forms of images; see figures 41 and 42.

Finally, the size of the images is definitely ascertained by the following passages: "food was offered to each one (of these images), and the *tamales* they gave them were very small, in keeping with the images themselves, which were small. The food was placed in diminutive plates . . . two little cup-shaped gourd vessels were filled with *pulque* and put before them" (book II, ch. XXXV).¹⁹

A few words may now be said about the clay heads fractured at the neck, found at Teotihuacan, briefly alluded to in Part I of this paper, p. 159. Many of these exhibit the same character of workmanship, of head-gear, and of facial individuality, as the heads that form the subject of this article, but differ from them in offering unmistakable evidence of having been attached to bodies of clay. In some specimens the head is found in bas-relief on a portion of a flat thin background, and this probably formed part, at one time, of a complete representation of a corpse, such as shown in the specimen

¹⁹ "This accursed beverage (*pulque*, the fermented juice of the Agave) was a special offering to the gods, and in several sacrifices and offerings I came across (besides eatables) feathers, copal and other childish things, such as toys of bone, and little dishes of terracotta, and also beads; I found very small jars of *pulque* as well" (Duran, vol. II, p. 291). Light is hereby thrown upon the probable reason for the multitude of diminutive earthen vessels found in the ancient graves of Mexico. They have generally been thought to be children's toys, and to mark the burial-place of children.

from the writer's collection (*fig. 43*). Its seated position coincides with the testimony of the *Conquistador Anónimo* as to the mode of burial (ch. xxiv, ed. Icazbalceta).

Some of the fractured heads are broken across the base of the flat broad neck, on which traces of ornamentation exist. These may have belonged to the entire figures of clay, the existence of which is attested by innumerable fragments of limbs, hands, and feet, and of bodies over which draperies of clay were placed. These fragments would seem to indicate another form of effigy, in which the whole human figure was executed. Not having seen one of these entire, the writer has been unable to form a definite opinion of them, and is much more inclined to think that such heads were broken from the peculiar mummy-shaped objects so plentiful in collections. These are of a

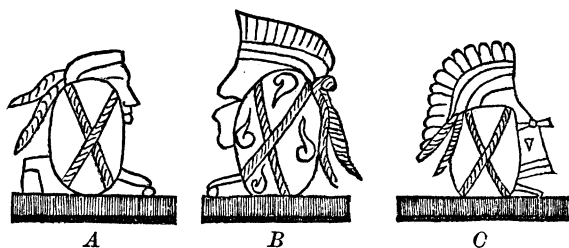


FIG. 45.—*Arch. Bodl. H. 75.*

single conventional form, invariably display a broad neck-ornament, and are pierced transversely in two places.

In *figure 44* is shown a possible manner of passing a cord through these perforations, by which its ends remain free for suspension, and the body assumes the familiar swaddled form invariably connected with representations of the dead. That such were actually suspended is proved by Torquemada, who says "in honor of the Lares (*Tepic-totons*), dolls made of wool, in the shape of infant boys and girls, were hung in the crossways; . . . these were similar in appearance to the dolls made in honor of the mountain gods."²⁰ Thus, after following a distinct line of research, we find ourselves again confronted

²⁰ The following passage from Duran (vol. II, p. 274) evidently refers to the same custom: "On this the first day of the third month, *Tozoztontli*, there was practised an abuse and superstition which I have actually seen in many places, indeed in almost all, at the present day. It is that, above their cultivated patches, they stretched cords from tree to tree, and from these, at certain intervals, suspended

by the *ecatontontin*, the effigies of the dead ; and we become convinced that with them alone rests the solution of the problem.

Numberless relics of various kinds, found in the same locality, are evidently connected with funeral ritual. Thus, fragments of large and small earthen vessels, the grotesque masks and heads of animals that ornamented them, spindle-whorls, beads of bone and stone, flakes of obsidian, arrow and spear heads, all seem to prove that burial customs were here observed. Finally, numerous little vessels, most of which are of coarse pinched clay containing two narrow deep cavities, show by their peculiar form their adaptability to hold the incense sticks, the burning of which constituted the most frequent of

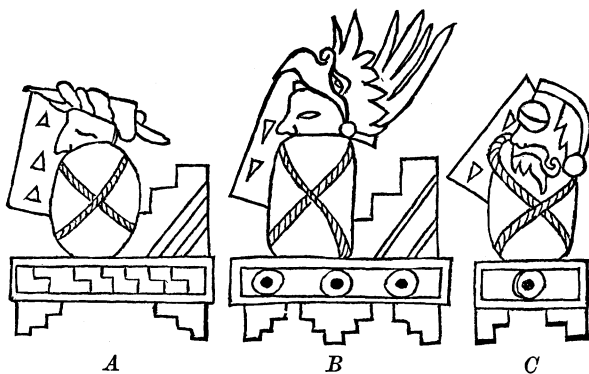


FIG. 46.—*Arch. Selden, A. 2.*

all offerings. That Teotihuacan was a place of burial, is a fact frequently mentioned by the early writers, but their testimony seems to have been lost sight of ; and the opinion that it was used for this purpose at the time of the Conquest has never, to the writer's knowledge, been expressed. Considering the antiquity of the Pyramids, the conclusion to which the foregoing investigation naturally leads is of no ordinary interest.²¹

little idols, adding rags, or something or other, so that those who do not know or understand should think that these are scarecrows or children's toys : in reality it is but superstition and abuse."

²¹ The light thrown upon the existence of a form of ancestor-worship among the Ancient Mexicans, by this investigation, is one worthy of further consideration, and it is the writer's intention to present the materials collected upon this subject in connection with Teotihuacan as a place of burial.

From the statements here presented the following conclusions are drawn: (1) that, at the time of the Conquest, it was the prescribed and common custom to make effigies of the dead which reproduced in miniature the form of the bound body and the insignia of a deity with which it was invariably decked:²² (2) that, judging from the native pictures, such distinctive insignia were confined to the head alone, whilst the body was of a plain, conventional shape; one method of making it being of a piece of wood covered with papers on which, by means of an adhesive substance, a head, at times decorated with feathers, was set (*figs.* 45, 46): (3) that these effigies were of diminutive size, and existed in countless numbers in many localities: (4) that the peculiarities of the terracotta heads found at Teotihuacan, and the conclusions to which the study of them leads, fully justify the inference that they were at one time mounted on bodies similar in appearance to those described: (5) that this inference affords a satisfactory explanation of the existence of these heads, of their head-gears like those of Mexican "deities," and of the impressions which they show of a decoration that has been lost, and also accounts for their shape, size, and number:—and this explanation is offered as the solution of the "enigma of the many heads."

ZELIA NUTTALL.

²² Thus, the head-dress of one of the mummied bodies given in *fig.* 46, *A*, shows that a woman is represented, as will be seen by comparison with *figs.* 26, 27 in Part I of this article. *C*, of *fig.* 46, exhibits the Tlaloc symbols found in the clay head illustrated in *fig.* 21, Part I. This circumstance is rendered of special interest by Clavijero's statement: "He who met his death by drowning was dressed like the idol of Tlaloc" (ed. Mora, p. 192).